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SUBJECT: DARFUR PEACE TALKS: OBASANJO MEETS DARFUR PARTIES

REF: ABUJA 650

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo stressed the importance of getting a peace deal soon to parties to the Darfur conflict on March 25. Obasanjo also asked the African Union mediation for a clear schedule for the negotiations and expressed his desire to weigh in on the peace process in other capitals. Obasanjo's efforts, as do ours, require the AU to put the entire peace package on the table this week in order not to lose the momentum and the high level interest now being shown in finalizing a deal. The AU is promising to deliver the paper, however, we remain concerned that the mediation lacks the capacity to do so. End Summary.

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OBASANJO MEETS GOVERNMENT AND MOVEMENT DELEGATIONS
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¶2. (SBU) On March 25, President Olusegun Obasanjo met with the Government of Sudan delegation and then the three rebel movements. According to African Union (AU) Mediation team members, Obasanjo wanted to hear their current positions directly from them before he traveled abroad. He also wants to be prepared to weigh in with Khartoum and Tripoli to move the process forward. Obasanjo stressed the importance of getting an agreement as quickly as possible in both meetings. Sudanese Delegation head Magzoub al-Kalifa reportedly disparaged the AU Mediation's efforts and complained that the process was too slow. Magzoub told USDEL on March 26 that Obasanjo asked the AU for its immediate plans and a clear schedule for the discussions in coming weeks. AU Chief Mediator Sam Ibok said that within one week the complete security arrangements language would be ready and that power and wealth sharing package would be on the table at the end of this week.

¶3. (SBU) Sudan Liberation Movement faction leaders Minni Minawi and Abdelwahid Nur and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) spokesman Ahmed Tugod Lissan met together with Obasanjo. They relayed similar accounts. They complained that the AU's outline of the key issues for Obasanjo was unfavorable to the movements' demands. They then tried to make their case on powersharing issues, such as region and vice-presidency, but describe Obasanjo's reaction as non-committal. Nonetheless, all three movement camps told us that they view Obasanjo's engagement, particularly with Khartoum and Tripoli, as essential to the process.

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MAPPING EXERCISE CONTINUES
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¶4. (SBU) Throughout the weekend, SLM faction leader Minni

Minawi and the Government of Sudan's military officers worked with the AU and USDEL on the mapping of their forces. USDEL and AU mediation team member Alex de Waal are providing expertise, but the AMIS mapping experts will not arrive until the end of the week. Nonetheless, the process continues with a high level of focus from both SLM and the GOS. The Sudanese military officers tell us that they are pleased that after two years, the most important element of a workable cease-fire is underway. In preparation for his turn at the map, SLM faction leader Abdelwahid Nur is obtaining GPS coordinates for his forces. On March 25, Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) members told us that they will also participate in the mapping exercise. In conjunction with the mapping exercise, USDEL also worked with de Waal on language for overall agreement, the key issues of which will be reported in SEPTEL.

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GOS ENGAGEMENT
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15. (SBU) USDEL meetings with the GOS on March 25 and 26 indicate a greater willingness to engage, but have yet to yield any major movement on key issues. The GOS continues to wait for the entire document to be put on the table. Magzoub has reiterated the GOS position and outlined the importance of maintaining a north-south balance and a National Congress Party majority when working on formulas for Darfurian representation at all levels of government. USDEL also met with a small GOS working group appointed by Magzoub, headed by Finance Minister Lual Deng and includes GOS members of all three commissions. The group is supposed to help the GOS team work through tough issues. While this could be a positive development, we cannot judge its relevance or

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potential until there is a draft paper on the table to discuss.

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COMMENT
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16. (SBU) We keep hearing that the paper will be on the table this week. Salim reportedly arrives back today. The AU mediation will be meeting on March 28 to discuss the "package". We are pushing for the paper earlier rather than later in the week. Without it, the AU is in danger of losing the building momentum, interest from the parties, and from key outside players such as Obasanjo.
CAMPBELL